6-1-1959

The Development of the Sunday School in the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod

C Rodger Meyer
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, rodger@rodgermeyer.com

SHORT TITLE

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL IN THE MISSOURI SYNOD

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL IN THE LUTHERAN CHURCH--MISSOURI SYNOD

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Practical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

---

by

C. Rodger Meyer

June 1959

Approved by: Arthur C. Repp
Advisor

Alfred von Rohr Sauer
Reader

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY AND METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

In the present day educational program of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod the Sunday school numerically holds the major position; this, however, has not always been the situation. It is only in the last thirty years that the Sunday school has risen to such great strength, pushing the parochial school off to the side. It is because the Sunday school has come to have such a great influence on the synod that the writer decided to trace the development of this educational institution in an effort to understand better its present character and to discover ways in which it may be made more effective in its role.

The study limited itself to the Missouri Synod, including its English root, the English Synod, and touched only briefly on the Sunday school movement in so far as other denominations were concerned. It took into account the numerical growth, the official and unofficial opinions concerning the movement during its various phases of development, and the contribution of the various materials and practices. The progress of the movement was traced independently through the Missouri Synod and the English Synod prior to their amalgamation in 1911.

The major source of information was The Lutheran Witness, the official publication of the English Synod and later of the

Missouri Synod, which was exhaustively read to catch the feeling of the synods toward the Sunday school. Of equal value were the personal notes of Dr. Arnold C. Mueller, presently editor of Sunday school material for The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. His compilation and translation of references to the Sunday school in the German publications of the Missouri Synod were invaluable. Together with general histories of the Sunday school in America and Europe, the various other publications of the synods such as convention proceedings, the parochial reports, and the educational and theological periodicals furnished the remainder of the source material.

In the footnotes of the paper the following abbreviations will be used: L. W., The Lutheran Witness; A. C. M., the personal notes of Dr. Arnold C. Mueller; P. E. S., Proceedings of the English Lutheran Synod of Missouri and Other States; Schulblatt, Evangelisch Lutherisches Schulblatt.

The study showed that many of the present day deficiencies of the Sunday school can be traced back to a lack of official concern and supervision during the formative years of the movement.

CHAPTER II

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL MOVEMENT IN EUROPE AND AMERICA

The European Background

Contrary to popular opinion, the Sunday school as a religious, church sponsored organization was known long before Robert Raikes began the modern movement. It is reported that Martin Luther had a "Sunday school" and that John Knox also started one in Scotland in 1560. Even the Roman Catholic Church experimented with Sunday schools in Milan, Italy, before the time of Raikes. To Raikes, however, does go the credit of beginning the modern movement that has spread throughout the world.[1]

Probably Raikes never fully realized what he was starting when he organized his primitive Sunday school around 1780; and when he died, he more than likely thought that he had seen his program succeed in the task to which it had been geared. Actually he had only seen the beginning of a vast movement that was to affect people and church denominations everywhere.

Although from a similiar motive, Raikes' Sunday school was designed for a different purpose than that of our present day institution. Raikes saw it as a means of improving the living

---

[1] Paul W. Spaude, The Lutheran Church Under American Influence (Burlington, Iowa: The Lutheran Literary Board, 1943), p. 89.

standards of the people through education. For the most part the situation of the common, lower class people was very bad. Living conditions were horrible; ignorance was the rule; and crime was a normal thing. Although the upper, rich class fared very well, children born into the lower class were exposed from the time of their birth until their early death to utter filth both of a physical and spiritual nature. Children just old enough to talk could curse so fluently that it would make one's ears burn, and chances were very good that somewhere along the course of their life on this earth they would spend time in prison.

Actually it was at the prisons that Raikes first started his rehabilitation program. Even though he was of the rich upper class of people, a newspaper publisher, he had a great concern for the less fortunate. His attempt at prison reform was met with ridicule and failure, but he would not give up. If he could not improve their lot in prison, then perhaps he could keep them from having to go.

It was almost a foregone conclusion that he could do little for the adults among the lower classes, so he concentrated his efforts on the children. Since most of the older children had to work during the week, Monday through Saturday, Raikes decided to set up schools on Sunday to which the parents could send their boys instead of just turning them out on the street to play. The parents were agreeable, but the children had never experienced anything of this nature before and were not so co-operative.

Slowly, as he brought the children under control and gave them some rudimentary knowledge of secular subjects mixed in with religious training and enforced church attendance, a marvelous transformation took place. Surprisingly, not only did the children change, but they also began to influence their parents.

It was slow going. The first teachers were neighborhood women whom Raikes hired for a small sum. They for the most part had never had any experience in this sort of thing and could not even control the children. Raikes himself had to take over the discipline problem, quite often marching the boys home to be "birched" by their parents while he stood by and watched.

For three years a limited program went on without much public notice. What notice there was brought opposition. Some thought that Raikes was just foolish, others that he was "cracked"; but he continued. Within three years he had opened seven or eight of his Sunday schools averaging thirty scholars each. Soon girls were admitted to the schools and it was found that they were as much a problem, if not more, than the boys had been; but even they were able to be "tamed."

The condition as Raikes experienced it in Gloucester was well known in all parts of England, so when Raikes finally revealed his scheme to the general world and could show that it was successful, the reception was immediate. Everywhere people who were interested in helping the "masses" gained new hope. Now perhaps they had the key. So much faith was placed in the Sunday school that John Wesley advocated that Sunday schools be sponsored in

every Methodist Church. Sunday school boards were formed and pulpits rang with praises for the institution. Robert Raikes was the most lauded man in the Kingdom.

Raikes' main idea was to raise the level of intelligence and thereby raise the standard of living; religion was only a facet of the program. As the churches began to get hold of the program, however, the emphasis shifted. More and more it began to be religious training with little or no secular learning.

The growth was stupendous. "In 1785, The Sunday School Society for the Support and Encouragement of the Sunday School in Different Counties of England was founded"; and in 1803 The British Sunday School Union, a publishing agency, was organized. By 1818 England had 5,463 Sunday schools with 477,225 pupils.[2]

American Acceptance

The Sunday school movement caught fire in America also. Already in 1789, Francis Asbury, a Methodist, had organized a Sunday school in Virginia; and although the first Sunday schools in America were modeled after Raikes' in that they were primarily designed for the neglected children of the community, they soon invited all of the children to take part. A new objective was necessitated as the public school came into existence taking care of the secular side of the child's education so that the Sunday school began to concentrate solely on the religious aspects

---

[2] A. C. M.

of instruction. In the early 1800's, all along the New England coast and wherever the church had gained a foothold, the Sunday school flourished.

Now the need was felt to organize the individual Sunday schools into Unions for better and more effective and economical work. The Philadelphia Sunday School Union was organized in 1817 and the American Sunday School Union appeared on the scene in 1824. These organizations published hymnals, Sunday school textbooks, teacher's guides and other related materials. As time went on, The National, and then The International Sunday School Union became realities; but there was one big drawback: even the more liberal churches were beginning to see that the unionistic element of these organizations was detrimental. As a result, reorganization took place, and although uniform lessons were recommended, the individual denominations were encouraged to produce their own lesson helps. With this revision, the Sunday School Union flourished. In 1924 the World Sunday School Association numbered 32,677,611 members in 34,000 schools with 3,520,192 teachers and officers.[3]

The American Lutheran Reaction

As far as the Lutheran Church in America was concerned the Sunday school movement did not progress very rapidly. In the first place, most of the Lutheran bodies that came from Europe did not feel a need for such an institution. The Sunday school

---

[3] A. C. M.

in America, for the most part, was a program of religious training on Sunday that was tacked on to the regular secular education that the child was getting in the public schools, and since the Lutherans had their own Christian day schools which combined the two areas, there was no need for a Sunday school. Their philosophy of education made religion an integral part of learning and not just an addition. Most of them also had an intensive program of confirmation instruction, and the Christenlehre, or Kinderlehre, was a regular part of either the Sunday morning service or a separate congregational activity in the afternoon.[4] Indeed, this Christenlehre program is often looked upon as a type of Sunday school that existed long before Raikes'. The need of a Sunday school program was further decreased by the catechetical preaching of many Lutheran pastors, while the association of the Sunday school with the English language made it undesirable to the "mother tongue" bodies.

As time went on, however, the self-sufficient attitude of the Lutheran churches in America gave way to re-evaluation. They began to realize that the other denominations in the neighborhood of their church were claiming Lutheran day school children as their Sunday school pupils. Lay, if not clergy, interest was growing; and even the church was beginning to think that it should use every means at its disposal for teaching the Christian Gospel, and

---

[4] The Christenlehre was usually a catechization of the entire congregation by the pastor on the basis of Luther's Small Catechism.

this included the Sunday school. Members also realized that the Sunday school was a mission opportunity for their church and day school.

Although there are records of Sunday schools affiliated with Lutheran churches as early as 1804, it seems that most of these failed because of lack of congregational support. The first Lutheran synod to go on record as being in favor of the Sunday school was the English speaking North Carolina Synod in 1811.[5]

From all indications, it was the lay effort that actually started the Sunday school movement in the Lutheran church in America. The Laymen saw that their children were being drawn to the Sunday schools of other denominations and realized the need of something to counteract this influence. Their own Sunday school was the logical answer. Quite often however, the pastor only tolerated such a program and would do nothing officially to help it out; and the day school element in the congregation, feeling itself in some sort of danger, usually opposed it. Because of this, the Sunday school in many cases became an organization existing alongside, and sometimes in competition with, the church. This was unfortunate, for without proper direction and guidance, using whatever materials they could find that seemed suitable, and having to rely on inferior teaching ability, the Sunday school often lived up to the fears of the Church.

---

[5] Spaude, op. cit., p. 98.

CHAPTER III

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL IN THE ENGLISH SYNOD[1]

In the Missouri Synod the Sunday school program experienced about the same reception that it had had among other Lutheran churches that had come over from Europe: it was felt to be unnecessary, if not detrimental, in view of the traditional parochial day school program. However, as the Lutheran communities began to be influenced by the influx of other denominations which had Sunday schools, the practical attitude changed. Particularly among the English speaking Lutheran churches was this true; and

---

[1] In 1872 several English speaking congregations that had sprung up in western North Carolina, eastern Tennessee, Missouri and Arkansas formed the English Evangelical Conference of Missouri. This body held several conferences with a German Lutheran synod, Die Deutsche evangelisch--lutherische Synode von Missouri, Ohio und anderen Staaten, founded in 1847 and presently known as The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, and received aid in organization. Their request for membership in this synod as The English Mission District in 1887 was turned down and they were advised to organize an independent English Synod. In 1888 the fifteenth convention of the Conference adopted a constitution and elected officers. At this time The Lutheran Witness, a publication started in 1882 was made the official organ of the Conference; and a resolution was passed to join the Synodical Conference, an affiliation of several independent Lutheran synods, to which the German Missouri Synod was also a member. The name English Conference was changed to English Synod in 1891.

This English Synod experienced quite a rapid growth in the following years as more and more English speaking Lutheran congregations were founded in the expanding United States. When the original intent of becoming a district of the Missouri Synod was realized in 1911, it contributed, besides a large number of congregations, a large array of literature, St. John's College, Winfield, Kansas, Concordia College, Conover, North Carolina, and The Lutheran Witness which became the official English organ of the Missouri Synod.

in Missouri Synod history the English Synod became the leader. In a letter, Dr. Henry B. Hemmeter, an early leader of the English Synod, indicated that the English Synod had Sunday schools when it was organized.

> The Sunday school in the English Synod began with the founding of the Lutheran Churches that joined the older congregations in Missouri and the congregations in Coyner's store, Virginia. These congregations included that of Pastor W. Dallmann at Baltimore and that of Pastor Theo. Huegli at New Orleans. Both of these congregations had the Sunday school before the English Synod was organized in October 1885.[2]

Besides the marginal note in the 1887-8 Parochial Report of Synod, the first significant mention of the English Sunday school program appeared in the February 7, 1888 issue of The Lutheran Witness. In a letter to the Editor, the Superintendent of the Sunday school of Emmanuel Congregation, Webster County, Missouri, wrote:

> How would it be, if you would open the columns of your paper to a Sunday school department? Or give it any other name if you find one more appropriate. My proposal is that all the Sunday schools--including the Colored, of course, witnin our synodical connections, give reports of their standing, increase and doings from time to time, adding any other items which they and the editor may consider of interest.[3]

The Editor answered:

> The Columns of our Witness are open for all useful communications to whatever department of churchly life they may extend. Reports of Sunday-schools and parochial schools, catechetical and Biblical lectures, and other information

---

[2] A. C. M.

[3] L. W., VI (February 7, 1888), 132-133.

on the important subject of Christian education will always be greatfully received. We shall prefer to name this department Educational.[4]

A month later the first of several articles from this congregation appeared. It is particularly interesting in that it describes the Sunday school as it was known at least in this congregation. No other Sunday school took the opportunity to use this column in such a way so there is no indication as to whether this was a general practice or not.

> Our Sunday school . . . resembles the Christenlehre of the German congregations. We rehearse a part of the Catechism and a Biblical History, and have the children give a song or two. In order to encourage both old and young "to search the Scriptures," we have adopted the plan of proposing questions to the adults and to the children. The questions are written down, given out, distributed, and the answers expected at the next meeting of the Sunday school after the minutes of the preceding meeting have been read. The children's Questions refer chiefly to Biblical History. Those given to the adults bear on doctrine and practice.[5]

Although from time to time The Lutheran Witness reported or commented on the Sunday school in other denominations or in other parts of the world, there is not much mention made of the early growth and development of the program either in the English of the German Synod. From reports that appear later, it is evident that there were several Sunday schools in existence, but for some reason there was little public reference to them at this time. It may have been that some congregations were a little ashamed of their

---

[4] Ibid.

[5] A. M., "Educational Column," L. W., VI (March 7, 1888), 150.

Sunday schools in the face of the German attitude against them; while the fact that some were strictly lay organizations with little or no congregational support or recognition might also account for a lack of notice. Before 1896, there was no regular way of indicating that a congregation had a Sunday school except to write it on the margin of the parochial report to Synod; and the progress of the Sunday school movement in the Synod can only be ascertained by brief notes in The Lutheran Witness such as that which appeared in the November 21, 1891, issue: "Our English Sunday school at Red Wing now numbers 72 children. Our work here is promising good results."[6]

When a special rubric for the Sunday school did appear in the English Synod Parochial Report for the year January 1,1896, to December 31, 1896, twenty-nine congregations reported twenty-eight Sunday schools, one congregation reporting two Sunday schools.[7]

Evidently compiling its figures from unofficial sources, The Lutheran Witness of November 7, 1894, presented this picture of the English Synod.[8]

	1887-8	1890-1	1891-3	1893-4
Sunday schools	2	3	8	25
Scholars	130	360	1273	2711
Teachers	--	--	--	200

---

6 "Church News," L. W., X (November 21, 1891), 96.

7 "Parochial Report," P. E. S. (1897), pp. 48-49.

8 "Statistics of the English Lutheran Synod of Missouri, 1884-1894," L. W., XIII (November 7, 1894), 82.

Although the marginal references to Sunday schools in the Parochial reports do not indicate as many Sunday schools for these years, the Lutheran Witness account is probably the more accurate.

It is interesting to note that despite the evident size of the Sunday school movement the Jubilee issue of The Lutheran Witness did not mention the Sunday school in The Educational Review.

While the Sunday school might not have attracted much mention in The Lutheran Witness, and scarcely more than a few lines here and there in the official writings and statistics of the English Synod, its apparent impact upon the synod, and even synod's dependence upon the Sunday school, is most surprising.

In the thinking of synod, Sunday schools and mission stations went hand in hand. Back around 1890 the statement was made that it was "the custom to establish a Sunday school whenever a mission was started, a very natural procedure,"[9] and here and there other inferences to this effect crop up in the literature of this period.

Not only did the establishment of a mission congregation mean the starting of a Sunday school, but the Sunday schools were also looked upon as one of the major contributors to the Mission Fund of synod. The convention Proceedings of 1895 noted that "the Church Extension Fund now amounted to over $400, nearly all of which was contributed by our small Sunday schools within the past two and one-half years."[10] The Proceedings of 1907 reported:

---

[9] A. C. M.

[10] P. E. S. (1895), p. 40.

> A number of our congregations and Sunday schools have contributed very liberally to the mission treasury, but a large number do not make a very good showing . . . due to the lack of a systematic plan to support Synod's mission work.[11]

Further on it recorded two recommendations:

> a. That all our congregations and Sunday schools be requested to adopt a plan of regular and systematic support of the mission treasury.
>
> b. That Children's Reformation Day be observed by all our Sunday schools, and the offerings of the children be gathered for our mission treasury.[12]

A recommendation similiar to (b) was also passed at the 1909 Convention.

Synod, however, was not only interested in how much the Sunday school was contributing to the mission treasury. Individuals within Synod were vitally interested in the children that were attending these schools. They were aware of the short-comings and the faults of the Sunday school as it was known in other denominations, and though they do not specifically say that this is their concern, they were carefully building a wall against this danger. The concluding half of the 1897 convention essay, "Lutheran Church Polity and Policy," spoke specifically of the Sunday school situation:

> Sunday school teachers: For our Sunday schools we need teachers. These should self-evidently be members in good standing in the Church, "apt to teach," and have an adequate knowledge of the Bible and Catechism. To appoint persons of other denominations teachers in Lutheran schools would be a

---

[11] P. E. S. (1907), p. 41.

[12] Ibid., p. 43.

monstrosity. Since the pastor, because of his superior office, is justly made responsible for the nature of the doctrine disseminated in the Sunday school, it is right and proper for him and the church officers to adopt such precautions in the way of teachers' meetings, Lesson Leaves, Bible Histories, etc. as will do away with the danger of having wrong doctrine taught.

Sunday school Superintendent: In our synodical connection the office of Sunday school Superintendent is comparatively a new one. Care should be taken not to have this office encroach upon the pastor's, he being by virtue of his office Superintendent of the congregation's day and Sunday school, and of any other religious instruction that may be given in his charge. The right of the pastor should ever be recognized to examine into lessons taught and into the mode of teaching, and to lead the Sunday school in devotion or to address it when he so desires.

We fully recognize the value of a good superintendent's services in supplying the minister's place in his absence, or relieving him somewhat of the Sunday's strain when present, or attending to the difficult routine work of the Sunday school. And we wish to lend additional value to his service by having the relation between him and his pastor fully understood.[13]

The essayist continued:

All teachers, even lady teachers in the Sunday school, must be proved whether they are apt to teach. The distinctive teaching of doctrine should not be included in the province of the Sunday school teacher; his activity should be limited to hearing the recitation of the catechism and the Bible texts. Whatever lessons the pastor, who is responsible for all the teaching, wishes to be inculcated, he should teach his teachers in advance so that they become his mouthpiece. It is sometimes held that ladies should not teach any religion in school, but it has been shown that the Apostolic prohibition does not apply to the teaching of young children by women.

Good lesson leaves are a great help to the pastor, but he must actively superintend also the manner of teaching by visiting different classes and by taking them in hand now and then. Moreover, in this way the pastor becomes acquainted

---

[13] P. E. S. (1897), p. 27.

with the Sunday school children.

> The greatest point to be emphasized is that all the offices mentioned in the essay, as that of the superintendent and teacher, devolve from the ministerial office, and that the pastor is responsible for all that is taught in the school and for the way this teaching is done. The superintendent of the school should, or course, normally be elected by the congregation and his duties and relation to the pastor should be clearly understood.[14]

Perhaps as a result of this essay or as a natural outgrowth of the gathering impact of the Sunday school upon the individual congregations, The Lutheran Witness came out in 1900 (repeated in 1902) with a six point program that specifically outlined the areas of activity for the congregation, pastor and Sunday school.

1. The Christian congregation is the guardian of the doctrine and practice obtaining in its midst, as well as the administration of its own temporal affairs.

2. To the regularly called pastor, and to him alone, is delegated, among other things, the duty of teaching publicly in the congregation and of superintending the religious instruction of its members.

3. The congregation may appoint assistants to enable the pastor to perform the duties incumbent on him.

4. Sunday school teachers and officers are assistants to the pastor in the instruction of the young of the congregation.

5. The Pastor should utilize the teachers' meetings to inculcate the lessons to be taught in the Sunday school, and to instruct his assistants as to what and how he wishes them to teach.

6. Those who prove themselves to be faithful and trustworthy assistants in the Sunday school should be trusted as such, and pastor and congregation will do well not to hamper, in any unnecessary way, individual efforts on

---

[14] Ibid., p. 31.

the part of their tried teachers.[15]

No doubt there was a real danger of the Sunday school getting out of hand, particularly if the sectarian Sunday schools were having any influence on the program, for many of the sectarian Sunday schools were completely lay organizations and often grew to be churches in their own right. Many of the Sunday schools that were started in Missouri Synod circles were also lay organizations with little if any pastoral supervision. This was particularly true if the pastor of day school teachers were antagonistic toward the Sunday school. In an effort to reach the laymen who were conducting these Sunday schools and create a defence against this tendency, The Lutheran Witness raised its voice:

> The Sunday school is undoubtedly a good institution in its place. It must always however, be looked upon simply as one of the methods by which the church does the work incumbent upon her. In other words, the church is always supreme, and the Sunday school can never usurp her place. And if the Sunday school, through its management or otherwise, seeks to create the impression that the work of the church is no better, no more important than its own, the Sunday school becomes a hindrance to the work of the church . . .. Whenever it is rightly conducted, the Sunday school is under the jurisdiction of the pastor and congregation, and is counted a part of their work.[16]

Of course the concern was also directed toward the congregation that it feel its responsibility for the Sunday school. Far from being a hindrance, if properly used, the Sunday school could

---

[15] [G. A.] R[omoser], L. W., XIX (October 7, 1900), 65. For an expanded explanation by the author see "The Relation Between the Congregation and the Sunday school," L. W., XXI (October-November, 1902), 162, 170, 180.

[16] L. W., XIX (October 7, 1900), 65.

be a positive force, particularly in the area of mission work. A. L. Graebner, in the Theological Quarterly of 1899, carefully delineated the area of activity for the Sunday school and the day school and pointed out that they were in no way compatible or equal; but he does acknowledge that the Sunday school can be a tremendous aid to the congregation in the area of mission work. It is to confine itself, however, only to the mission prospects and mission work. The predominant note of this and other articles is that the Sunday school is a side organization, a step-child, that is in no way to interfere with, or be a substitute for, the church service, Christenlehre, or day school. Those enrolled in these agencies should have nothing to do with the Sunday school except to bring unchurched friends to it as a step toward involving them in the total program of the church. Regardless though, of its limited function, whatever teaching that is done in the Sunday school must be done well. The teachers must be qualified to teach and the catechism is to be the primary source of teaching material. Although Graebner says that Sunday school lesson leaves should not be used, this must be understood in the light of the times when there were mostly sectarian materials available with very little Lutheran Sunday school literature being published.[17]

As the English Synod grew, the Sunday school grew; often the Sunday school growing faster than the congregation with which

---

[17] A. G[raebner], "Sunday Schools," Theological Quarterly, III (January, 1899), 78-97.

it was affiliated. In many cases the establishment of a mission congregation was made possible through the prior existence of a mission Sunday school. Along with this growth and the increasing concern for good, doctrinally sound Sunday schools, came the increased activity in producing materials.

This concern for materials prompted the English Synod in 1891 to request the Synodical Conference which published the Lutheran Pioneer, an "admirable monthly," to make it available on a weekly basis for use in the Sunday schools.[18] Not waiting for action on this request, the Rev. A. W. Meyer began publishing the Lutheran Guide as supplementary material.[19] When the Synodical Conference declined to change their material, the English Synod Convention of 1893 adopted the Guide as its own publication and expressed the wish that if possible it be published at least twice a month.[20] At the Convention of 1897 a resolution was introduced

> To make the Guide a weekly, with one page at least devoted to the next Sunday's lesson in order to have uniformity and a well-defined play in our Sunday schools; or that at least, the contents be of a lighter nature.[21]

This was referred to the next convention (1899) which also did not take any action; however, the Sunday school teachers' helps began appearing in The Lutheran Witness on January 2, 1902.[22]

---

[18] P. E. S. (1891), p. 41.

[19] P. E. S. (1893), p. 12.

[20] Ibid., p. 37.

[21] P. E. S. (1897), p. 4.

[22] "Notes on Bible Lessons," L. W., XXI (January 2, 1902), 6.

As the Proceedings of the 1899 Convention attest, The Lutheran Guide was well received:

> The Lutheran Guide, Synod's Sunday school paper, has likewise been regularly issued. As an improvement we have offered better paper and a liberal supply of appropriate cuts. The paper seems to enjoy the favor of our and other schools. The subscription list we consider satisfactory and sufficient for financial success.[23]

The Convention of 1893 indicated interest in more specific Sunday school literature. The Rev. A. C. H. Overy and the Rev. J. A. Detzer were "encouraged" in the publication of their Sunday school lesson leaves on Bible history and the Catechism. In addition, "A plan and brief exposition of Luther's Small Catechism in questions and answers . . . [was] to be published in the Guide."[24] Although a committee of Theo. Huegli and C. J. Broders was appointed in 1895 to look into "the printing of lesson leaves from which a Bible History may later on be compiled . . .."[25] it was powerless to do anything until a "sufficient number of subscriptions were secured to guarantee the cost of the undertaking."[26] The committee was still inactive in 1897 when Rev. Huegli resigned[27] but soon afterwards, in response "to various enquiries and requests," it began publication of The Elim Lesson Quarterly in 1898.[28] At the

---

[23] P. E. S. (1899), p. 45..

[24] P. E. S. (1893), p. 37.

[25] P. E. S. (1895), p. 44.

[26] Loc. cit.

[27] P. E. S. (1897), p. 14.

[28] A. C. M.

1899 Convention it was reported:

> The Elim Lesson Quarterly was published. It experienced a cordial reception. Though this publication was at once placed on the level of established publications of similiar nature of other denominations both in makeup and in price, the undertaking was at once successful in every respect.[29]

As the Synod grew, and as the materials gained recognition in other circles, the publication of more and better materials continued. The Elim Quarterly was discontinued in December, 1901, and a four booklet series, The Life of Christ, took its place. This material was graded and had a larger scope than the Elim Quarterly. A similiar venture into the Old Testament did not materialize on schedule, but in all, the program continued to expand and fill the need.[30]

An evidently independent effort in filling the need for good, doctrinally sound Sunday school material appeared in the Theological Quarterly of 1899. It was a three-year concentric program utilizing material from the Small Catechism, the Bible and the hymn book which the author felt were sufficient. Although there was no name affixed to the article, it seems to have been written by A. L. Graebner as a plan for preparing children of a mission Sunday school for participation in the congregations day school and Christenlehre.[31]

---

[29] P. E. S. (1899), p. 43.

[30] P. E. S. (1903), p. 56.

[31] [A. Graebner], "Textual Material for Use in Sunday Schools," Theological Quarterly, III (July, 1899), 354-368; Supra, p. 19.

As was noted before, in January, 1902, The Lutheran Witness began printing teachers' helps which were to aid the teachers in preparing their lessons. These helps were supplementary material to the Sunday school lesson leaves, Enchiridion, Bible and hymnal which the children were to use. Prior to this time there had only been the teachers' manual or lesson leaves, not both, because of the cost involved. Having the teachers' materials printed in the Witness cut the cost and also discouraged the practice of teachers merely reading their manual to the children, or actually giving them copies to read for themselves.[32]

The problems of what to print and how best to do the job were ceaseless. Reports and recommendations of the 1911 Convention sound much like the ones from previous years, but the program of publishing Sunday school leaflets and teachers' aids had definitely gotten under way. The publication program of Synod did not stop at producing Sunday school lesson leaves and helps, though, the related fields of printing a catechism and a Sunday school hymnal also came into consideration. At the Convention of 1907, President Eckhardt recommended:

> that Synod take steps to publish its own catechism, either a translation of the one now in use in the German Missouri Synod, provided said Synod grants us permission to do so, or another based on Conrad Dietrich's German Catechism.[33]

The Convention accepted the recommendation and implemented it by

---

[32] "Notes on Bible Lessons," L. W., XXI (January 2, 1902), 5-6.

[33] P. E. S. (1907), p. 36.

appointing a committee to begin work.

> This committee shall through the columns of the Witness ask for suggestions to guide them in preparing this catechism: shall have it printed in a cheap temporary form for review and criticism; and shall present the manuscript of the completed work to Synod for adoption.[34]

Although there is indication that the committee tried unsuccessfully to include the new catechism in the Sunday school's new Bible History book,[35] there is no further mention of the Catechism before the English Synod became the English District of the German Missouri Synod.

The Promptings for a Sunday school hymnal date back to 1897, and it is but a short time later, 1901, that the Proceedings report that it had been published both with tunes and without.[36] It is in a way surprising to note how rapidly this was accomplished and what great effort went into it compared with the slow, painful development of the Sunday school teaching materials.

As strong as the Sunday school movement might have been in the English Synod, it was of course not the only educational voice to be heard. The day school program of synod was also very strong and it presented a problem in delineating the role of each in the congregation. This problem was not as acute in the English Synod as it was in the German Missouri Synod because the language difference was not a compounding factor; however the presence of

---

[34] Ibid., p. 37.

[35] P. E. S. (1909), pp. 77-78.

[36] P. E. S. (1901), p. 131.

Sunday schools in the English Synod did cause some friction over-against the German congregations; but even they were not united in their opposition. Allowance was made for the different circumstances of the English congregations, for as G. A. Romoser remarked in 1902: "Nearly all of our congregations, even those with parish schools, have been forced by circumstances to institute and maintain Sunday schools."[36] These circumstances were the English speaking Sunday schools of other denominations which were enrolling Lutheran day school children.

It cannot be said that the English Synod was interested only in the Sunday school and neglected the encouragement of the day school. In 1897 an article in The Lutheran Witness mildly chided the congregations which had only Sunday schools:

> However, it should be observed that, other things equal, the possibility or necessity to organize Sunday schools, proves the possibility or necessity to organize parochial schools. If there is material for one, there will also be material for the other.[37]

Whether it was good or bad, the Sunday school program in the English Synod did have the eventual effect of substituting the Sunday school for the day school in many congregations, though it did not completely replace it as some had feared.

---

[36] G. A. Romoser, "The Relation Between the Congregation and the Sunday School," L. W., XXI (October 9, 1902), 162.

[37] D., "What Are the Prospects for Christian Congregational Schools in the English Lutheran Church?" L. W., XV (April 21, 1897), 172.

CHAPTER IV

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL IN THE GERMAN MISSOURI SYNOD

There seem to be conflicting ideas concerning the acceptance of the Sunday school into the German Missouri Synod[1] but for the most part the feeling seemed to be negative. The original idea of the German Lutherans was a parochial day school for each congregation, and the Sunday school was viewed as a non-Lutheran innovation that would do more harm than good. It would certainly undermine the parochial school program.

Part of the difficulty in determining the exact history of the Sunday school movement in the German Missouri Synod is a possible confusion of terms. Besides the parochial school program, the German congregations had what was known as the Christenlehre, or Kinderlehre, which consisted of the catechization of the children, young people, and adults on the basis of Luther's Small Catechism. There were variations of how this was done, but usually all those who had been confirmed, and often even the pre-confirmands, would take part in this teaching-learning-review situation as a part of the morning service or in a special meeting on Sunday afternoon. As the term Sunday school, or Sonntagschule, came into use, some congregations would refer to their Christenlehre as a type of Sunday school. As was previously noted, some congregations that instituted Sunday schools modeled them after the Christenlehre.[1]

---

[1] Supra., p. 12.

Even though not exactly the same as the Sunday school, the Christenlehre was enough like it to be an adequate "substitute." Consequently, where the Christenlehre was practiced, the Sunday school gained little foothold. In most of the German speaking congregations, this condition persisted as late as 1930.[2]

Still another reason for not adopting the Sunday school was the confirmation instruction program which intensified the regular religious instruction given through the parochial school. With the parochial school, the confirmation instruction and the Christenlehre doing far more than any Sunday school could ever hope to accomplish, the Sunday school received a cold shoulder from the majority of German Missouri Synod congregations.

Not all of these congregations felt this way, however. St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Albany, New York, organized in 1841, records a Sunday school already in 1842;[3] and there is evidence that the Rev. J. M. Buehler started a Sunday school in San Francisco in 1860.[4]

The opposition of many other congregations was slowly being broken down in other areas of the nation as well. Principally in Large urban areas where sectarian churches were rapidly being

---

[2] Paul W. Spaude, The Lutheran Church Under American Influence (Burlington, Iowa: The Lutheran Literary Board, 1943), p. 95.

[3] P. G. Prokopy, "One Hundred Years of Sunday School," L. W., LXI (September 1, 1942), 306.

[4] M. H. Tietjen, "Notes on the Rev. J. M. Buehler of California," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XXVI (January, 1953), 192.

established, the German congregations were forced to establish sound, good Sunday schools to compete with the influence of the run-of-the mill Sunday schools of these sectarian groups. Oftimes these Sunday schools of the German Lutheran congregations were actually continuations of the day school's classes in religion to which the regular day school children were expected to attend.

It was the moralistic, sectarian type of Sunday school which the German congregations violently opposed. If the example of these Sunday schools had not been so bad, perhaps the German Lutheran reaction to the Sunday school movement might have been different. Usually, however, the teaching was inferior and the doctrine was unacceptable. Besides, the very idea that a child could learn enough religion in less than an hour a week was unthinkable to the day school minded Lutherans from Europe.

Regardless of adverse feelings, many congregations were forced to establish some form of Sunday school as an emergency measure

> in order to prevent the children from attending other Sunday schools. The sects were angling for children and using inducements in order to get them into the Sunday school. For that reason Lutheran teachers who want to protect the lambs from the wolves are compelled to conduct "Sunday schools," which, however, differ from those just described in every respect.[5]

Much the same theme is reflected in an article written by Professor C. A. T. Selle in 1872:

> If such schools Sunday schools are founded within congregations that are recht-glaubig, we cannot deny that they have

---

[5] "Sonntagschulen," Schulblatt, II (1867), 311.

> a certain blessing, presupposing, however, that they do not substitute for the Christenlehre, or catechetical instruction. Nevertheless, even such blessing is more of a negative character, i.e., it is to ward off a peril; not a blessing that truely edifies the church. For in larger cities it is the practice of the sects to inveigle our Lutheran children of school age on Sunday morning into their Sunday schools. Some have in this manner been estranged and drawn away from us. . .. In the presence of this danger it may be necessary and useful for our congregations in such cities to have Sunday school at the same time, in order to keep the wolf from entering the sheepfold of Christ. Apart from this, however, Sunday schools are entirely superfluous for our congregations, indeed, they are not proper. For Sunday is intended as a day of rest and not as a school day. Entirely wrong and terribly superficial is the notion that one hour of religious instruction on one day, Sunday, is enough for the children. Our children should receive instruction every day in God's Word.[6]

At a teacher's convention in 1884, the essayist, teacher B. Widman, stressed in particular the value of the Sunday school as a missionary agency and pointed out the duty of the congregation to draw to itself also the children who are not members of the congregation and then exert every effort to bring these children to know the seriousness and comfort of God's Word. Through the children the parents can also be influenced so that the congregation has an even wider missionary outreach.[7] This is probably one of the earliest references to a positive quality in the Sunday school, and it was to become one of the major arguments for the acceptance of the Sunday school.

---

[6] C. A. T. Selle, "Die Ursache des Verfalls des früher allgemein herrschenden Parochialschulwesens in unserem Lande," Schulblatt, translated by Dr. A. C. Mueller, VII (1872), 17.

[7] B. Widman, "Geschichtliches über den Streit der Zifferisten mit den Anhangern der Notentabulatur," Schulblatt, translated by Dr. A. C. Mueller, XXIII (1888), 84.

Eleven years later, Dr. A. L. Graebner encouraged this missionary use of the Sunday school, but very severely took to task any and all congregations which would even consider using the Sunday school for their own children, particularly if it detracted in any way from the parochial day school, the Christenlehre or confirmation instruction. He also was of the opinion that the children thus gained through Sunday school were to be weaned as quickly as possible and brought into the regular educational program of the congregation.[8]

The advent of the public school where no acceptable religious education could be offered was also a contributing factor as the Sunday school made inroads on the German Missouri Synod. Already in 1898 the problem of what to do with children whose parents sent them to public schools instead of to the congregation's day school was under consideration. The Sunday school was better than nothing if the parents could not be persuaded that they were doing the wrong thing in sending their children to public schools; but it was feared that more and more parents would consider this an adequate substitute for the expensive day school program.[9] History proved this fear well grounded.

As the Sunday school movement spread in the German circles, the cry became stronger for materials with which to conduct the

---

[8] A. G[raebner], "Sunday Schools," Theological Quarterly, III (January, 1899), 78-97.

[9] 100 Years of Christian Education (River Forest, Illinois: Lutheran Education Association, 1947), p. 163.

schools. At first it was almost universally accepted that the Sunday school teacher would only teach Luther's Small Catechism and some Bible passages, the feeling being that the Sunday school was only a temporary measure to prepare the children to take part in the Christenlehre and the day school where they would receive more complete instruction in Bible history and the like. The teachers should at the most present only that which the pastor had specifically told them to pass on to the children.

Gradually, however, just as many had feared, more and more inexperienced, doctrinally weak teachers began to take charge of ever expanding classes, and they were being expected to "teach" and interprete Scripture instead of just repeating what the pastor had previously told them. Materials had to be provided, and since synod would not even recognize their existence, let alone publish materials for them, it was necessary for the Sunday schools to borrow from other denominations. To combat this, teacher J. P. Meibohm published a Sonntagschulbuch in 1891. This little 136-page book contained a six-year program covering the principal Bible stories, Luther's Small Catechism with questions and answers, the Table of Duties, prayers, Bible verses and hymns. In an article in the Schulblatt of 1893, teacher Meibohm specifically notes that he does not consider the Sunday school as a substitute for the parochial school of Christenlehre, but he does not feel that a Sunday school program has no value whatever. If properly used it can be a great aid to the congregation particularly as a missionary institution. As such it does not have to teach the German language, nor use it

in instruction since that would be a waste of the already inadequate time available. He also felt that the parochial school children could and should participate in the Sunday school because they could aid in drawing the missionary children into the fuller participation of the main educational program of the congregation.[10] Both the use of the English language and the attendance of the parochial school children in the Sunday school were ideas that most German congregations did not like, but which were adopted in time.

Meibohm's was the first Sunday school book of any size published by men within the German Missouri Synod, although it was not the first Sunday school material made available by interested persons in synod. An advertisement in the Schulblatt of 1900 notes an "Erstes Textbuchlein fuer Sunntagschulen" compiled by A. L. Graebner, "forty pages published in German and English."[11] Other independent efforts also began to appear about this time trying to fill the need.

At the turn of the century there were still many who refused to admit that there was any good in the Sunday school, but slowly the congregations of the German Missouri Synod were being forced to accept and adapt the Sunday school to their changing environment. At the time of the amalgamation of the English Synod with the German

---

[10] J. P. Meibohm, "Uber Sonntagschulen, deren Einrightung und Fuhrung," Schulblatt, XXVIII (1893), 38-39.

[11] Schulblatt, XXXV (1900), 88.

Missouri Synod in 1911 synod still had not officially recognized the Sunday school and had given it no help or encouragement.

CHAPTER V

THE GROWTH AND CHANGING ROLE OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL AFTER 1911

As far as the Sunday school's growth is concerned, there seemed to be an extra special meaning in the amalgamation of the English and the German Missouri Synods in 1911. Prior to 1911 the Sunday school was a small struggling movement with a very unstable position as far as the synods were officially concerned. It was praised by some, denounced by others, and was tolerated because it was the lesser of the two evils in an effort to keep Lutheran children out of the Sunday schools of other denominations. This attitude limited the spread of the Sunday school because it could be justified only where there were other churches in the neighborhood competing for the children's attention.

It was the English Synod that began the trend away from the idea that the Sunday school was solely a missionary or stop-gap agency. An increasing number of congregations began to use the Sunday school as a legitimate educational agency alongside the parochial school and the Christenlehre. As the Sunday school took on this new educational role, and as this new understanding of the Sunday school spread to the German Missouri Synod, the Sunday school began a tremendous growth.

In 1911 the Sunday school was statistically just a hanger-on, being mentioned only in the margins of the parochial report for

amalgamated synod. The only fairly accurate reports in regard to the Sunday school were from the English Synod congregations which had been reporting their Sunday schools for some time. Even these partial reports indicated that by 1911 the Sunday school movement was becoming very strong. Although the number of Sunday schools and teachers was not reported, the parochial report for 1911 showed 66,738 children enrolled in the Missouri Synod congregations.

The changing role of the Sunday school during the years after the amalgamation is further reflected in the fact that the day school program began to slow down while the Sunday school movement grew by leaps and bounds. As more and more congregations began to see in the Sunday school a way of decreasing the financial burden of a parochial school, the dire prediction that the Sunday school would supplant the day school came true. Although the Sunday school movement showed a constant growth except for a brief period at the beginning of the Second World War when many young men were called to service, the number of parochial schools varied from year to year reaching a low of 1,097 schools in 1945 after a high of 1,380 schools in 1936: enrollment reached a low of 71,151 in 1940 after a high of 80,263 in 1931.

It is interesting to note that after 1946 the parochial school program again gained momentum and in 1957 surpassed its previous high enrollment by about 60,000. The statistical figures on the following page give a fairly complete picture of what happened in the Missouri Synod's educational program since 1911.

STATISTICAL COMPARISON OF THE DAY SCHOOL AND THE SUNDAY SCHOOL ON THE BASIS OF SELECTED YEARS WHICH SHOW THE PEAK AND LOW POINTS IN THE PROGRESS OF THE DAY SCHOOL OVER AGAINST THE STEADY INCREASE OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

	1920**	1931	1936	1940	1945	1957
Congregations and preaching stations	4,184	4,804	5,021	5,178	5,303	6,387
Day schools	1,310	1,358	1,380	1,259	1,097	1,404
Day school enrollment	73,063	80,263	76,811	71,151	78,234	140,622
Sunday schools	1,587	3,041	3,415	3,635	4,051	5,149
Sunday school enrollment	108,133	223,024	249,229	281,572	290,166	704,044

* Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, The, Parochial Reports [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House].

**Prior to 1920 the figures for the day school also included some part time agencies.

While the Sunday school began to take on the character of a major educational agency in the Missouri Synod, it did not lose its missionary character as an agency to reach "the heathen at our doorsteps."[1] Throughout its history the missionary outlook was a permanent feature of the Sunday school movement. With emphasis still on "reaching the heathen" the Sunday school program of the Missouri Synod branched out beyond "our doorsteps" in 1948 and began its Sunday school by mail program.

The Alberta and British Columbia District in Canada had started this program on a limited scale to reach their members in outlying areas already in 1934. When the idea finally filtered down to the Synod's Sunday school board in the 1940's it had proved to be effective.

Caring first of all for its congregations' own members in areas too remote for regular Sunday school attendance, Synod also extended Sunday school materials to whomever requested them. Using the facilities of the local congregations, district and synodical mission boards and the Lutheran Hour,[2] the "Sunday School By Mail" program was presented to the world.[3] Two years later, in 1950, more than 3,000 were enrolled in the "Sunday School By Mail" program.

---

[1] W. G. P[olack], "Sunday School Statistics," L. W., LXII (December 21, 1943), 416.

[2] The Lutheran Hour is the international radio program of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod.

[3] F. C. Streufert, "School by Mail," L. W., LXVII (August 24, 1948), 273.

and regular lessons were being sent to Japan, Hawaii, Germany, England, the Phillipines, Central and South America, and the Bahamas, not to mention the United States and Canada.[4]

It was natural that as the Sunday school movement grew the synods would have to take official recognition of its presence. By 1922, however, even though the English Synod had contributed its Sunday school material when it became the English district, the synod had done nothing officially. In response to a request from interested persons in St. Louis, a general Sunday school board was appointed by the president of the synod in January, 1922.[5] This board made a study of the Sunday schools in the synod and began preparation of materials for all age levels of children and aids for teachers. When their progress was reported to the 1923 synodical convention, they were encouraged in their work and were made a permanent board with the task of working with Concordia Publishing House[6] in producing Sunday school materials. At the same time Synod rejected the idea of calling a full time editor of Sunday school material and resolved that the Sunday school board and the general school board should meet together frequently

---

[4] "Sunday School by Mail Reaches Japan," L. W., LXIX (January 24, 1950), 28.

[5] A. L. Miller, Educational Administration and Supervision of the Lutheran Schools of the Missouri Synod 1914-50 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 41.

[6] Concordia Publishing House is owned and operated by The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod.

to harmonize their efforts.[7] After four joint meetings of the two boards it became evident that there could and would be harmony between the two previously antagonistic groups.[8] In response to a second request for a full time Sunday school editor, the Rev. Wm. H. Luke was appointed editor of Sunday school literature. He began his work in May of 1927.[9]

Organization and development continued to advance rapidly. As the Sunday school movement grew, districts also began establishing Sunday school boards. As they found it more expedient, they consolidated the Sunday school board with their general school board to form a single board of education. Synod also consolidated its two boards in 1929 but allowed each group to retain its offices in Chicago and St. Louis.[10] This separation defeated the purpose of the amalgamation of the boards, so in 1932 the synod established a single office for both committees in St. Louis, and began enlarging its staff. The Rev. A. C. Mueller was called to succeed Luke who had died in October of 1932; Dr.J. M. Weidenschilling was employed to develop the Junior Bible Class department.

There had been agitation for several years to appoint an executive secretary for parish education but nothing was done in

---

[7] Miller, op. cit., p. 41.

[8] Ibid., p. 42.

[9] Loc. cit.

[10] Ibid., p. 43.

this respect until 1943 when the Rev. Arthur C. Repp was called upon to develop, among other things, the Sunday school program and related part time elementary agencies.[11]

The tremendous growth of the Sunday school was of course not over, but it had by this time reached a point where it was recognized as an integral part of synod's educational program on an equal footing with the parochial school. What had started as a suppressed rebel uprising had become one of the major agencies of the synod. It was educating the majority of the Missouri Synod's members and was augmented for the most part only by one or two years of confirmation instruction. What had been feared by those who opposed the Sunday school when it first began to make inroads on the Synod's congregations had become a reality, although after 1946 the parochial school program began to recover much of the ground it had lost.

---

[11] Ibid., pp. 54-56.

CHAPTER VI

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS AND TEACHER TRAINING AFTER 1911

The rapid growth of the Sunday school movement in the Missouri Synod aggravated the problem of deriving the most benefit from this institution. When classes had been limited to mission children and carefully picked teachers had the children only memorize Bible passages and catechism texts there was little need of extensive Sunday school materials or a teacher training program. As growing numbers of Sunday schools were established in the congregations of synod, and as these Sunday schools became larger and had to instruct the congregation's own children, the problem of providing adequate materials and supervision became acute. Not only were the lay teachers unskilled in teaching proceedures but usually they themselves had only a tenuous grasp of the doctrine they were supposed to be teaching. Clearly what was needed was Lutheran materials to put into the hands of these teachers but since synod did not recognize the existence of the Sunday school as a legitimate educational agency it would not prepare materials for it. Some Sunday schools went to other Lutheran synods that were producing Sunday school materials but others did not discriminate and used whatever they could get their hands on regardless of doctrinal content.

Seeing that what was being produced by individual men in synod was not enough to fill the need, Concordia Publishing House, without

the backing of synod, began publishing some Sunday school materials in 1911; but despite repeated efforts to get synod to approve the program nothing was accomplished until Edmund Seuel became manager of the publishing house. His efforts to get the St. Louis faculty to edit the Sunday school material that the publishing house was producing met with refusal for a number of years. When he found Unitarian Sunday school leaflets in the desk of a Lutheran school in New Orleans where he was attending a synodical convention in 1916, he returned to St. Louis more determined than ever to force the faculty to censor and approve the publishing house's Sunday school material. His treat to publish the reasons for their refusal in a synodical publication moved the St. Louis faculty to agree to edit the Sunday school material. Seuel chose one of the most ardent opponents of the idea, Prof. Nicholas Metzger, as editor. Metzger himself came to see the value of the project and enlisted the support of the other objectors.[1]

Synod itself began to take a hand in supervising and assisting the Sunday school when the 1920 convention instructed its president to appoint a Sunday school committee. The editor of the Sunday school material, however, remained an employee of the publishing house until 1927 when he was finally made responsible directly to the official board of Synod.[2]

---

[1] A. C. M.

[2] 100 Years of Christian Education (River Forest, Illinois: Lutheran Education Association, 1947), p. 200.

This new Sunday school material rapidly caught hold in the congregations and supplanted the various materials that they had been using. By 1929, a questionaire sent to all the pastors of synod indicated that 96.15 percent of the Sunday schools in synod were using the Concordia Publishing House series. A few were still using materials from other Lutheran synods and only one non-Lutheran publication was reported. Other church bodies also began using the publishing house's material and in 1929 the Sunday school publications had a circulation of 202,700 while the Synod had only 189,820 pupils.[3]

The full scale publication of synod approved Sunday school lessons was the first step in bringing the Sunday schools of synod doctrinally into line, but just having doctrinally sound materials did not completely answer the problem of unskilled teachers. Although here and there voices were raised in regard to the inadequacy of the teachers, The Lutheran Witness of 1912, carried the first extensive exposition of what the Sunday school teacher should be. This article, "The Qualifications of a Lutheran Sunday-school Teacher," by J. C. Ambacher, appeared in four parts from January 4, 1912, through February 15, and covered these seven points: Legitimacy to Teach, Devoutness, Intelligence, Dignity, Gentleness, Punctuality, and Perseverance.[4] This discussion

---

[3] A. C. M.

[4] J. C. Ambacher, "The Qualifications of a Lutheran Sunday-school Teacher," L. W., XXXI (January 4,and 18, February 1, and 15, 1912), 3-4, 11-12, 21-22, 27.

was based on Scripture and presented a thorough picture of the ideal Sunday school teacher. Although its sights were definitely high, it was nevertheless a very practical article and did not ask the impossible.

The careful selection and training of teachers was a constant theme in The Lutheran Witness and other synodical publications because the idea was prevalent that the Sunday school should gladly take anyone who wanted to teach or who thought they could teach. It was stated time and again that although teachers were badly needed, there should be a critical selection and a training program. Teachers meetings should be held regularly and pastors should carefully explain the materials for the teachers to pass on to their children. Pastors that left their Sunday schools to shift for itself without his supervision and training were denounced as not fulfilling the obligations of their office.

A teacher training program sponsored by synod had to wait until 1929. A survey in that year showed that only 13.5 percent of the Sunday schools had weekly teachers' meetings and in most cases these were merely business meetings.[5] The creation of a synodical Sunday school board in 1929, implemented a partial remedy for the situation. In 1930, the Sunday school board sponsored a two week summer camp for Sunday school workers at Arcadia, Michigan,[6] and a few years later a correspondence course

---

[5] A. C. M.

[6] "Notes and News," L. W., XLIX (May 13, 1930), 171.

appeared.[7] Neither of these seemed to have any lasting effect.

On the local level around 1929-30, large cities and districts set up Sunday school associations to help in the training of teachers and the general improvement of the Sunday school program in member congregations.

In 1936 the president of synod appointed a committee to develop a teacher training program consisting of an integrated series of booklets covering the various aspects of teaching, mainly in regard to understanding the Bible better. These booklets began appearing in 1938 and by 1942 had had a considerable impact upon the Sunday schools. By February of 1942, text-books, test sheets, and instructors guides had passed the 150,000 mark and 20,000 credits had been issued to teachers in 800 congregations. Such courses as "Working Together," a course in organization and administration, "Old Testament History," "New Testament History," "Fundamental Christian Beliefs," "Directing the Learner," and "Learning to Know the Child" began to give the teachers of synod a much better background for teaching.[8]

---

[7] 100 Years of Christian Education, op. cit., p. 201.

[8] A. C. Mueller, "Teacher Training--An Opportunity," L. W., LXI (February 17, 1942), 55-56.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The Sunday school movement in the Missouri Synod has had a very colorful but difficult road to travel. Although today it holds the honor of being the major educational agency for the majority of the members of the Missouri Synod, there was a time when the Sunday school was an unwanted institution. At its inception the Sunday school was primarily a missionary agency in both the English Synod and the German Missouri Synod. It had to correct the bad features of its "sectarian" counterpart, and also had to stay out of the way of the parochial day school. At best it was only tolerated by the leaders of the synods in its early days.

As time went on, various external factors made the Sunday school a necessary, if not a desired, institution. Public schools were drawing many children away from the parochial schools, and some provision had to be made to give them at least a little religious instruction. Non-Lutheran Sunday schools were also pulling the children of the Lutheran pasishes into their schools on Sunday mornings. In order to keep their own children, the Lutheran congregations had to develop a comparable program. The missionary aspect of the Sunday school prompted still other congregations to open some sort of a Sunday school program. Gradually more and more congregations saw a possible benefit in such an endeavour, and the Sunday school movement was on its way.

In many ways, the Sunday school was unduly hampered by the adverse attitude of the leaders of the synods. Some pastors would have nothing to do with a Sunday school in their own congregations, and the laymen had to run them the best they could. Often outright opposition was expressed by the pastor and parochial school teachers because they were afraid that the Sunday school would replace the parochial school. Thus, from the very beginning the Sunday school lacked competent leadership.

This lack of proper leadership in the Sunday school movement accounted for most of the low doctrinal standards and poor teaching which were charged against the Sunday school. (Undoubtedly many of the undesirable aspects of the Sunday school program in the present day Missouri Synod are an outgrowth of these unguided beginnings.)

To counter-act the influence of the Sunday school material from other denominations, some Missouri Synod men independently produced Lutheran materials for Missouri Synod Sunday schools. Some of these men were moved to write materials because they considered a Lutheran Sunday school less offensive and detrimental than having Lutheran children attend the Sunday schools of other denominations. Others wrote because they felt that the Sunday school had a definite value as a mission or educational agency.

The Sunday school movement in the Missouri Synod had experienced rapid growth since it began in the latter half of the nineteenth century, but with the amalgamation of the English Synod with the

German Missouri Synod in 1911, the Sunday school program leaped forward. It did not take long for the Sunday school enrollment to rise above that of the day school, particularly when the day school suffered a severe set back because of the Sunday school. Only in recent years has the day school risen to the strength it enjoyed in the 1930's.

Even with the rapidly increasing strength of the Sunday school, the synod was very slow to accord it official recognition. Supervision and the publication of materials had to wait until the late 1920's. For ten more years the official program did little more than mark time while the Sunday school enrollment grew larger and larger. Finally action was begun in the 1930's and in the 1940's a creditable Sunday school program developed with the synod.

With the Sunday school and the parochial school no longer fighting, they both began to work side by side to help each other and both began to profit. Today the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod is a leader among other Lutheran synods in both the parochial and the Sunday school programs.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

English Evangelical Lutheran Synod (or Conference) of Missouri, The. Proceedings of Conventions and Parochial Reports, 1888-1911.

Evangelisch--Lutherishes Schulblatt, II (1867), VII (1872), XXIII (1888), XXVIII (1893), XXV (1900).

G[raebner], A. "Sunday Schools," Theological Quarterly, III (January, 1899), 78-97.

-----. "Textual Material for Use in Sunday Schools," Theological Quarterly, III (July, 1899), 354-368.

"Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, The," Lutheran Cyclopedia. Edited by Erwin L. Luecker. St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1954. Pp. 606-630.

Lutheran Education Association, The. 100 Years of Christian Education. River Forest, Illinois: Lutheran Education Association, 1947. Pp. 105-106, 163-164, 200-203.

Lutheran Witness, The. I-LXXVII (1882-1958).

Miller, Arthur Leonard. Educational Administration and Supervision of the Lutheran Schools of the Missouri Synod, 1914-50. Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1951. Pp. 40-48.

Mueller, A. C. Personal notes on the history of the Sunday school in the Missouri Synod.

Spaude, Paul W. The Lutheran Church Under American Influence. Burlington, Iowa: The Lutheran literary Board, 1943. Pp. 89-122.

Tietjen, M. H. "Notes on the Rev. J. M. Buehler of California," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XXVI (January, 1953), 191-192.